

WHERE ARE THE JOINT THEORISTS?

by

Lt Col Don Hoffman

8 Nov 1991

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY
JAN 1992
SPECIAL COLLECTIONS

Report Documentation Page				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.					
1. REPORT DATE 08 NOV 1991		2. REPORT TYPE N/A		3. DATES COVERED -	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Where Are The Joint Theorists?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) National Defense University National War College Fort McNair Washington, DC 20319				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for public release, distribution unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 07	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT unclassified	b. ABSTRACT unclassified	c. THIS PAGE unclassified			

INTRODUCTION: When studying military theory, the examination of an actual conflict gives us the opportunity to analyze existing thought to see if it is still appropriate. The Gulf War was the largest conflict for the United States since Vietnam. In this paper, I will briefly examine the war from the viewpoint of air, land, sea and space operations and discuss how these operations reflected the teachings of the major theoreticians we have studied. Of more interest, however, is the integrated direction of the war from a national and theater level. I will discuss this in greater detail and propose the idea that our conduct of joint warfare is not based on theory as much as it is based on doctrine.

IN THE AIR: The centrally-directed coalition air offensive first sought to blind Iraq by destroying radar sites and command and control facilities. Air superiority was also sought by attacking enemy airfields and any aircraft that got airborne. Nearly simultaneously, Iraq's suspected nuclear, chemical and biological capability was attacked. After these initial strikes, the emphasis shifted to the destruction and demoralization of the ground forces in preparation for the land battle. This classic application of airpower reflects the theory expressed by Mitchell, Trenchard and Douhet in that they all believed airpower should be used offensively and could be decisive, although I feel that Douhet was overly optimistic in his belief that civilian morale would quickly crumble under an air attack and victory through airpower would be complete and swift. I think that airpower alone could have eventually brought about the capitulation of Iraq, but not as

quickly or as totally as the ground sweep that occurred and it may not have achieved all of the objectives that we had set.

ON THE GROUND: The ground offensive initially sought to stop any advance by the Iraqis into Saudi Arabia. While weak, we chose to defend and when strong, we initiated the offensive as advocated by Clausewitz. The focus for the ground war was the army of Iraq. This was clearly Saddam Hussein's source of power, or center of gravity in Clausewitzian terms. After an effective air campaign, the ground offensive began by pushing rapidly forward on all fronts followed by a large flanking maneuver with an extremely rapid advance on the west which then swung back to the east to nearly envelop the Iraqi forces. The avenue of retreat was not totally cut off which Sun Tzu supported to prevent the enemy from fighting to the death. Although the coalition elected to pursue the attack along exterior lines, the interior lines held by Iraq (a Jominian advantage) were of little benefit because of the devastating loss of movement and communications resulting from the air attack.

ON THE SEA: Due to the absence of a sizeable naval threat, the sea forces provided principally a support role in the Gulf war. Naval airpower added significantly to the air war. There was no decisive battle to fight(Mahan), however the Navy obtained total control of the sea and waterways which allowed free movement of allied supplies and enforcement of the economic blockade. This control of the sea clearly reflects the advice of Corbett. Two other critical

roles were played by the sea forces--they kept Iran from possibly entering the war so in this respect, we applied Clausewitz's concept of working against alliances. They also pulled off an elaborate deception, as advocated by Sun Tzu, when they threatened to conduct an amphibious assault from the east which pinned down large numbers of the Iraqi defenders.

IN SPACE: The coalition relied heavily on space systems for navigation, communication and intelligence. A key to allied success, these assets removed much of the friction and uncertainty for the coalition by giving them a reliable picture of the battlefield. Although we don't have any space theorists to compare, Sun Tzu would have been quick to capitalize on this capability because he felt that careful planning could be done with reliable intelligence. Clausewitz on the other hand would not have thought this possible because he felt that the contribution of intelligence in warfare was limited.

NATIONAL DIRECTION: With the above four snapshots of how the different operations reflected the guidance of the theorists, how did the whole plan come together? I think the most important factor was that the President set clear, definable goals. Through Congress, the United Nations, our coalition partners, and the American public, he achieved a clear mandate for the use of military force to achieve these goals. In this respect, he closely paralleled the Clausewitzian notion of war as an extension of

politics and the idea of the trinity with government, military and the people all in harmony. With the stage set, he then gave execution authority to his military leadership, relying on their "military genius" to get the job done. The contrast with the conduct of the Vietnam war in this regard is striking.

JOINT EXECUTION, THEORY AND DOCTRINE: When we get to this point and discuss how the joint and coalition forces were employed at the theater level, I abruptly run out of theorists. Jointness and complementary use of forces are relatively modern concepts that arose as the media of the sea, air and space became available through technological advances. Clausewitz, Sun Tzu, and Jomini talked in generic terms of the "army" which can be extended to include all military forces but unique capabilities beg for unique ideas, a void that was partially filled by Mahan and Corbett for the sea and by Douhet, Trenchard and Mitchell for the air. The problem I have with these theorists is that they were advocates for their cause at the expense of others, not as a complement to them. There has been no clear voice that has discussed how to employ joint or coalition assets to achieve maximum combat potential. Ideally, theory should be distilled into usable doctrine which then drives strategy and tactics for the battle at hand. Experience derived from the battle should then provide a feedback loop to modify the theory. In recent years, however, the feedback loop has only served to modify the doctrine. There is more and more joint doctrine becoming available such as JCS Pub 1 and Pub O-2 which

contain a lot of good information. The problem with this doctrine however is that it is the result of the corporate review process which tends to eliminate controversy and dampen original thinking. Controversy and original thought are the domain of the theoretician which I feel is lacking in the joint arena. In place of joint theory, we have relied on doctrine derived from experience. We have learned from Vietnam, Grenada, exercises, etc. that some things work better than others. For example, in the Gulf, we had one commander. Under him we had component commanders who truly had control of their respective assets. The Air Component Commander, for the first time, directed all of the air assets including Navy and Marine Air. The strong leadership of the SECDEF, Chairman and CINC eliminated traditional service rivalries and allowed the use of each in a coordinated effort which maximized their unique effectiveness. The most obvious example is the phased ground attack which occurred in conjunction with the amphibious deception and after the air campaign had an opportunity to establish air superiority and soften the enemy defenses. In other times, with different leadership, this could well have been a simultaneous attack which would have absorbed significant casualties.

WHERE ARE THE THEORISTS? So where are the modern-day theorists that can address this problem and lay the groundwork for our future doctrine? I think that for several reasons, they are lost in the noise level of today's literature. If a military member has creative solutions for joint employment, he is usually muzzled by

his parent service, for to truly advocate jointness means to surrender a portion of your service's autonomy and clout. If the theorist is outside the military, he usually is not given much credence. This logjam has been around for some time. Recent theorists of note have been advocates (and some even zealots) for a particular piece of the pie. Since World War Two, many true theorists have been obsessed only with the application of nuclear power. I don't see any immediate relief in this area unless a successful leader such as Gen Schwarzkopf or Gen Powell would dedicate time after retirement to the task of producing a clear, concise body of ideas which would reflect how to jointly employ military power. Their credible experience, coupled with sage wisdom, could produce a basis from which to derive doctrine for the next several decades. This would replace the existing system where we rely on doctrine derived mainly from experience but not from theory.

CONCLUSION: The system is not broke--we have competent leadership making good decisions on how to employ military power and the success in the Gulf is testimony. I do feel that we have a void of succinct theory for the employment of joint forces. Just as a composer carefully chooses the right instruments to produce his music, a military commander should pick the proper forces for his needs. We presently have little guidance to help him with that decision.